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The Assist

Helping to Improve Access to and Progress in the General Curriculum

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Volume 1, No. 2

Introducing New Assist Elements

Dear Readers,

As full implementation of MI-Access draws near, we realize there are many audiences the new assessments will impact. All of those audiences have questions and concerns about what MI-Access is, why it was developed, and how and when it will be administered.

While we have a great deal of information to share from the state level, we realize that it is beneficial for groups to hear from their own members. Teachers are particularly adept at communicating with other teachers, parents are adept at communicating with other parents, administrators are adept at communicating with other administrators, and so forth. Because they share common background experiences, these people are able to talk with one another in unique, highly relevant ways.

For that reason, we have prepared three special features for this issue of The Assist that we believe will speak directly, and effectively, to parents, teachers, and assessment trainers. We hope you find these new features of interest. In an effort to build a strong communication link between all those involved in MI-Access, we plan to continue publishing such articles from the many stakeholders that the new assessments will touch.

Peggy Dutcher
MI-Access Project Director
E-mail: dutcherp@state.mi.us

Long-Time Special Education Teacher and Advocate Joins the MI-Access Team

It is our pleasure to announce that Frank McClelland—an experienced educator—has accepted the position of Special Education Consultant to the MI-Access Project. Frank first taught junior and senior high school, then, after five years, he moved to Special Education and taught in a Trainable Mentally Impaired (TMI) classroom for twenty-six years. Teaching, however, was only one of his many responsibilities. Frank also was a staff trainer, school improvement chairperson, and served as a teacher representative on various school district committees, ranging from health and safety to school reform.

Although he was treasured by his colleagues—who awarded him the Council of Exceptional Children's (Blue Water Chapter) Golden Nugget Award for his work with school safety—parents also recognized his exceptional skills. To that end, they honored him with a Special Education Teacher of the Year award.

Frank believed that after thirty-one years of teaching he was going to retire and take things easy. But, when asked to help implement MI-Access, his four-day retirement came to an abrupt halt. Why? McClelland claims it is because he was already heavily invested in MI-Access. During its development he served as an AUEN Trainer, member of the Content Advisory Committee, member of the Activity Development Team, and member of the Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee. He also helped edit,

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NOTES FROM THE CONTRACTOR

Who is your MI-Access Coordinator?

If you do not know the answer to that question, an important deadline may have been missed. Near the end of the 2000/2001 school year, forms were sent to all District Superintendents requesting the names of District and School MI-Access Coordinator designees. To date, we have received information from only a little more than half of Michigan's local and intermediate school districts.

This information is critical. We need it now!

It is the responsibility of the District MI-Access Coordinator to distribute training materials—which were sent in early October—to the School MI-Access Coordinators and to ensure that all coordinators and assessment administrators take part in a comprehensive training session. That session (or multiple sessions) must take place prior to the assessment window, which is scheduled for February 18 through March 29, 2002. Since those dates are not changing, districts need to get started now so assessment administrators can do their jobs this winter with greater confidence.

It is also the responsibility of the District

MI-Access Coordinator to:

- ✓ Coordinate the ordering, receipt, distribution, collection, return, and security of MI-Access assessment materials.
- ✓ Contact the MI-Access contractor if there is a shortage of or missing materials.
- ✓ Determine whether the District will order customized research codes and, if so, assign the codes.
- ✓ Serve as the communication conduit between the MI-Access contractor; MI-Access, Michigan's Alternate Assessment Program; and participating schools in the district.

Since MI-Access Coordinators are the lynchpins of the assessment communication system—all information and material flows through them—the contractor and the districts need to know who they are for every school and district. Therefore, if your district has not already done so, please contact the MI-Access contractor—BETA/TASA—immediately with your information. That way, District MI-Access Coordinators can begin receiving and distributing materials and scheduling the all-important MI-Access training sessions. You may provide us with your information by using the toll-free MI-Access Hotline (1-888-382-4246) or by e-mailing us at mi-access@tasa.com.

MI-Access Team

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format, and proof MI-Access assessment activities and various sections of the MI-Access manuals. And, if that was not enough, he also provided input on numerous other aspects of the project, such as the training videotape and accompanying materials.

Knowing as much as he did about the project, he was a natural for the position of special education consultant. But Frank explains that his decision to take the job goes well beyond that. "It was pretty obvious that MI-Access was coming," he says, "so I wanted to have input into it. I wanted to help keep the process user-friendly, make sure the assessments had a relationship to what was really going on in the classroom, and encourage continued input from the field. I have seen input effect the direction of this project and have been encouraged by the

open process," he added. "Now, as a staff person, I can be even more proactive in the development and implementation of Michigan's alternate assessment."

As a member of the MI-Access team, Frank will be responsible for a variety of tasks, including planning, developing, and facilitating regional training workshops that explore different strategies and tools—such as the AUEN—that can help students with disabilities gain access to and progress in the general curriculum.

We are pleased and honored to have someone of Frank's caliber and good humor join the MI-Access team. He can be contacted at 517-335-0477 or at mcclellandf@state.mi.us.

MI-Access Update

In case you are wondering...

- ✓ All MI-Access activities and tasks are on schedule for 2001/2002.
- ✓ The Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee (AAAC) reviewed the training videotape and materials, reviewed feedback from more than 400 educators who participated in the Winter 2001 administration of the assessment, and incorporated the feedback into a new videotape and materials for use this year.



The Alternate Assessment Advisory Committee reviewing training videotapes

- ✓ All MI-Access training materials have been finalized and sent to the MI-Access contractor for production and dissemination. The materials should have arrived in your district during the week of October 15. (If your District MI-Access Coordinator has not received them, contact the MI-Access contractor by using the toll-free hot line—888-382-4246—or by e-mailing them at mi-access@tasa.com.)
- ✓ Because materials have been or are in the process of being sent, it is important that we know who your District and School MI-Access Coordinators are. (See the MI-Access Contractor article titled "Who is Your Coordinator" for more information.)
- ✓ Up next are the Coordinator/Facilitator Conferences scheduled for November 8 and November 13 2001.
- ✓ Look next for the Live Coordinator Teleconference scheduled for January 23, 2002.

MEAP— What's the Answer!

For the 2001/2002 school year there are some changes in the Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) of which educators should be aware, particularly changes that relate to three areas—assessment accommodations, parent exemptions, and score exclusion. Following is detailed information that should help explain the changes in these areas.

Assessment Accommodations

The MEAP office recently faxed a memorandum, dated September 21, 2001, to all District MEAP Coordinators and elementary and middle school principals on the subject of "Audiotapes Used for Testing." This memorandum provided information on—and may have raised questions about—the MEAP and assessment accommodations. For example, how does the MEAP define "standard" and "non-standard" assessment accommodations? Are readers a standard or non-standard accommodation?

In order to get clarification on the issue of Standard and Non-Standard accommodations, the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services recently met with staff from the MEAP office. The following is the information provided by the MEAP office.

- First, there are many questions related to the use of audiotapes and readers as accommodations for the MEAP tests. The following table summarizes this information.

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Check it out!

The assessment component of the
Office of Special Education and Early
Intervention Services' Website

www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped

Involving Parents in MI-Access

By Jan Cheeney, MDE/OSE/EIS Parent Liaison

There are many issues facing parents with the coming of MI-Access in February 2002. To address those issues, it is critical that parents become partners in the process. If we involve parents early on and strive to turn everyone into willing partners, it will benefit us all.

First, remember that most parents are not familiar with or even aware of MI-Access. When they hear about it, they likely will have fears about what MI-Access is and what will happen to their child during the assessment. Teaching staff may or may not feel adequately prepared to deal with those fears.

As a result, the Department of Education, OSE/EIS, is working with parents and schools to develop materials to use in introducing MI-Access. These materials will help answer parent questions, such as why, where, when, how MI-Access will affect, and what it will do to and for my child. They also will address many other questions, including what MI-Access is, where it came from, who decided it would be developed, and what is meant by "Participation" and "Supported Independence."

As you think about how to involve parents in your districts and schools, imagine walking through the door for an IEP Team meeting and hearing for the first time that you will now need to help decide in which assessment your child will participate. I know how many parents react when faced with new information and asked for an immediate response. Anger. Therefore, it is imperative that we avoid this reaction and get information about MI-Access out to parents as soon as possible.

Determining the best way to reach parents, parent groups, and advocacy organizations requires some thought. To that end, the Department has asked and will continue asking parents what methods work best. Newsletters, brochures, videos, checklist style information regarding the differences in the assessments are just a few ways parents told us we can raise greater awareness.

Another issue to keep in mind is that many families are not familiar with any assessment for their child, let alone MI-Access. Parents with children in Special Education are more accustomed to evaluations by school psychologists, social workers, speech and language therapists, Occupational Therapists, Physical Therapists, and so forth. These evaluations make a judgment about their child and their development. Parents are then given a "report" that they may or may not find helpful.

Assessments, however, are different from evaluations, and parents have told us we need to clearly articulate that. Assessments gather data and then people use the data to make informed decisions. Parents need to know that the assessment itself does not make judgements about their child or his/her development.

Parents have many other questions that need answering. For example, what questions will be asked during the assessment? What will happen after the assessment results are back? When will the results be back? Will we have to meet again to discuss the results? Will I get a copy of the results? What if we choose the wrong assessment for my child? Will it cause stress for my child? How is an assessment different from a test? My child never does well in any kind of a test situation, what will be different about this one? How will this information be used to help my child? And, who uses the information?

To involve parents in MI-Access and develop meaningful answers to their questions, the Department plans to continue obtaining input and feedback from them throughout the implementation process. We believe that, with the on-going help of parents, we can develop effective communication materials, communication methods, and parent-specific outreach tools. Ultimately, our goal is to involve parents as much as possible so the information we disseminate is helpful, informative, and reassuring.

For more information on parental involvement in MI-Access, contact Jan Cheeney at 517-241-3509 or cheeneyj@state.mi.us.



The 22nd Annual Telly Awards

A national competition honoring outstanding
non-network television commercials & programs,
and non-broadcast video and film production



Finalist 2001

Michigan Department of Education
Office of Special Education and
Early Intervention Services
"In Michigan All Kids Count"
Future Media Corporation

MI-Access Training Video Wins Prestigious Award

As a testimony to the high quality of MI-Access materials, the 2000/2001 MI-Access Training Videotape received a Telly Finalist Award. The "Telly" showcases and gives recognition to outstanding non-network and cable TV programs, videos, films, and commercials. Created in 1980, the international award judges everything that goes into developing a final product—from the concept, writing, and on-screen talent through the set design, lighting, cinematography, editing, sound, and music—and rewards excellence in the overall quality. The MI-Access video was one of 1,700 finalists selected from more than 11,000 entries. Congratulations to Future Media Corporation, the Michigan Department of Education, and the MI-Access team on a job well done!

Lessons Learned About Informing and Training Assessment Administrators

By Jan Gaubatz, Special Education Supervisor

Bay-Arenac, the district in which I work, was selected to administer the Winter 2001 MI-Access assessment last year. From that experience, I learned a great deal about what MI-Access Coordinators—at both the district and school level—can do to effectively inform and prepare staff for administering MI-Access. I hope the following suggestions are of help to you.

First and foremost, trainers must know how to use the training video and accompanying materials. Therefore, before your training session begins, review the materials thoroughly. I worked with the materials over the weekend to make sure I understood them all and could share my knowledge with confidence.

It also is important to have as many answers as possible at hand. I knew many questions would be asked and that I would be responsible for supplying answers. One way I obtained answers was to visit the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention web site. There I found a set of frequently asked questions and answers that I printed out and gave to every staff member I trained. In addition, at the beginning of each training session, I reassured my staff that if the answer to their question was not on the list, I knew where to go to find it. I also gave my phone numbers to staff members and encouraged them to call me if they had questions later. I believe that knowing I was accessible made a big difference in their comfort level.

Another thing I found beneficial was to train district staff by building instead of as a collective group. By doing so, it made the task seem less daunting and created a feeling of support among the teachers. As a team, we went over the training

packets and a sample assessment form. I believe that the teachers I worked with felt more comfortable about implementing the assessment once they realized that (1) most of their questions were already answered, (2) there was a system of support built into the process, and (3) many of the activities they were required to observe were already taking place in the classroom.

Many of the teachers, itinerants, and classroom aides who were involved in the Winter 2001 assessment told me it triggered a variety of positive changes. For example, several teachers said they were doing a better job of writing lesson plans as a result of administering the assessment. Some also felt that participation in the assessment helped them better report progress back to parents. And, everyone agreed that the assessment caused them to think more about upcoming IEPT meetings and write effective goals and objectives for their students.

Being able to tell staff in advance who would be participating in the assessment and what would be observed was really helpful as well. It was also beneficial to touch base with teachers throughout the process and let them know that if they were short of or without materials, they would quickly be provided.

Essentially, I learned that providing as much information as possible up front helped to reduce the fears that teachers and other assessment administrators had about administering MI-Access. I also learned that there is a great deal of information already out there to assist you—information that can reduce the amount of time spent answering questions during training sessions and increase the time spent learning how to observe students.



Jan Gaubatz

What IEP Teams Must Know

The IDEA 1997 requires that students with disabilities be assessed with the same frequency as students without disabilities. (See The Assist article titled, "Federal Reporting Requirements.") MI-Access accomplished this by choosing assessment ages that typically correspond to the grades MEAP assesses. (The reason ages were selected—instead of grades—is that students administered MI-Access are not usually assigned a grade level.)

With MI-Access, there are a total of five performance expectations (PEs) for the Participation assessments and six PEs for the Supported Independence assessments. Table 1 shows who will be assessed with what PEs at which age.

As you review the table, keep in mind that a student must be the MI-Access assessment age by December 1st of the school year in which the assessment is administered. For example, this year the assessment window runs from February 18 - March 29, 2002. Therefore, in order to be assessed, students must be 9-, 10-, 13-, 14-, 17-, or 18-years-old by December 1, 2001.

MI-ACCESS PARTICIPATION

TABLE ONE

Age 9	Age 10	Age 13	Age 14	Age 17	Age 18
PE 1:	PE 1:	PE 3:	PE 2:	PE 3:	PE 2:
PE 3:	PE 2:	PE 5:	PE 4:	PE 5:	PE 4:
PE 5:	PE 4:				

NOTE: PE 1 is assessed only for nine- and ten-year-olds because, at that age, school is considered part of the "home and/or community environment."

MI-ACCESS SUPPORTED INDEPENDENCE

TABLE TWO

Age 9	Age 10	Age 13	Age 14	Age 17	Age 18
PE 1:	PE 5:	PE 1:	PE 5:	PE 1:	PE 5:
PE 3:	PE 7:	PE 3:	PE 7:	PE 3:	PE 7:
PE 6:	PE 8:	PE 6:	PE 8:	PE 6:	PE 8:

NOTE: PE 2 and PE 4 are not assessed by MI-Access because they are more appropriately assessed at the local level (that is, the activities take place in the home and community not in the school environment).

AUEN PERFORMANCE EXPECTATIONS

TABLE THREE

Participation:

- PE 1: Engage in typical patterns of leisure and productive activities.
- PE 2: Engage in a typical pattern of interaction.
- PE 3: Participate in effective communication cycles.
- PE 4: Participate in personal care, health, and safety routines.
- PE 5: Reach desired locations safely within familiar environments.

Supported Independence:

- PE 1: Complete personal care, health, and fitness activities.
- PE 2: Complete domestic activities in personal living environments.
- PE 3: Manage personal work assignments.
- PE 4: Complete activities requiring transactions in the community.
- PE 5: Participate effectively in group situations.
- PE 6: Respond effectively to unexpected events.
- PE 7: Manage unstructured time.
- PE 8: Proceed appropriately toward the fulfillment of personal desires.

Federal Reporting Requirements

As you may or may not know, IDEA 1997 requires states to report assessment results for students with disabilities regardless of how they are assessed. Since existing MEAP and MI-Access reporting forms do not ask for data on all students with disabilities (that is, those for whom a state standardized assessment does not exist), a new form has been developed.

This year, when MI-Access assessment materials arrive in the district, they will include a document called the *Determined by IEP Team (Not Participation or Supported Independence) Form*. It needs to be filled out for every student with an IEP that does not participate in either (1) the MEAP, (2) the MEAP with assessment accommodations, (3) MI-Access Participation, or (4) MI-Access Supported Independence. Detailed instructions for completing the form are included in the Winter 2002 MI-Access Coordinator/Administration Manual.

Following is the language from IDEA 1997 that resulted in the new form being created.

Section 34 CFR §300.139 "requires States to report to the Secretary and to the public every two years on the progress of the State and of the children with disabilities in the State toward meeting performance goals including performance on assessments, drop-out rates, and graduation rates. Additionally, 34 CFR §300.139 requires the State Education Agency (SEA) to report to the public, in the same frequency and detail as it reports for non-disabled children, on the number and performance results of children with disabilities participating in regular and alternate assessments and to include in those reports aggregated data that include the participation of children with disabilities together with all other children and disaggregated data on the performance of children with disabilities."

IDEAS



SUGGESTIONS

If you have ideas, suggestions, or tips you would like to see included in The Assist, send them to mi-access@tasa.com.

TIPS

From Skepticism to Support: How One Teacher Grew to Respect MI-Access

By Margie Steinkamp, Special Education Teacher

My name is Margie Steinkamp. I have been a Special Education teacher for 26 years, most of those in the Lansing School District. For the majority of my career, I have taught Elementary Trainable Mentally Impaired (TMI), but I have also taught Severely Mentally Impaired (SMI) and Severely Multipally Impaired (SXI). Currently, I teach a TMI Basic classroom in an inclusive setting at REO Elementary School in Lansing. My students are 8 to 12 years old.

Over the last 26 years, I have seen my share of changes. I have watched new ideas be presented, mandated, tried, and left by the wayside. As a teacher, the last thing I want to hear is that something new is coming that will (1) involve more paperwork, (2) require more documentation, and (3) use up my valuable time by interfering with my normal classroom routine. What other teachers and I especially hate to hear is that something new has been developed by non-teachers.

Imagine how I felt then, three years ago when I first heard about MI-Access. I received a letter inviting me to attend a meeting at the "ground level" of the assessment's development. I went to the meeting for two reasons: I was curious and it offered me a day away from the classroom.

At the first meeting, which was attended by teachers and professionals from across the state, we began discussing the levels of independence, the scoring criteria, performance expectations, and expected levels of response that would be used in the assessment. We then divided into small groups according to our experience and discussed, in more detail, the various elements.

I admit I was very skeptical. Although I saw some definite elements of organization by those in charge, I left thinking, "Oh my Gosh. How can this ever happen? How can an assessment like this ever be standardized? This is ludicrous." I know many others in the room shared my sentiments.

The next time I attended an alternate assessment meeting, I noticed that many of the same teach-

ers had returned, and many new ones had become involved. I also saw much more organization: A format had been developed and run through committees for content and sensitivity. At that meeting, we began to actually write assessment items in small groups, but we were still very skeptical.



The third time I worked with MI-Access, I administered the tryout assessment to my students. It was the first time I saw some of the items I had written in print. It was then that I realized teachers were directly involved in this project, and I began to take it seriously. I thought, "if we teachers are going to be directly involved, we better do the best job we can do. It better reflect what we want our students to learn and what we want to be accountable for—for ourselves, our students, our parents, and our colleagues, in both regular and special education."

The last meeting I attended was in April 2001. Our goal was to align MI-Access with the General Curriculum Framework. It was the first time that I heard that MI-Access would be fully implemented in Winter 2002, and I began to see the seriousness of—and need for—what we were doing. I watched the training video and asked a lot of questions. I realized that this was not something we were debating whether or not should happen. I thought, "it is going to happen because it is required. And, it is required because our students deserve it."

Suddenly, I had tons of questions and concerns because I realized it was my age group we were talking about. The majority of my students are 9 and 10 years old. I will be administering the assessment next year, and I want to do it right. How will IEPs be written? When should decisions be made? Who will be my resource during assessment time if I have questions about items and scoring? What is the hierarchy of responsibility for MI-Access in my school district? And, how will regular education professionals be informed and involved?

I also realized that communication was not happening in my district. I knew about MI-Access

because I had worked on it, but other teachers and teacher consultants knew absolutely nothing about it. I am sure this is true in other districts as well.

During a break at the April meeting, I approached Peggy Dutcher, MI-Access Project Director, with my questions. In particular, I relayed my concerns about the lack of communication within school districts, and how I was desperately concerned about teachers understanding MI-Access and being trained to administer the assessments.

Ms. Dutcher suggested that perhaps I could provide some ideas about what might be done to spread the word about MI-Access to teachers. After giving it a great deal of thought, and realizing that other teachers would not have three years to warm up to the idea of MI-Access like I had, I came up with several suggestions.

First, we need to communicate the background of MI-Access and its content and benefits to administrators, consultants, supervisors, coordinators, general educators, and especially special education teachers. When administrators receive information, they need to pass it on to teachers and other special education professionals—those who will administer the assessments.

Second, we need to make an honest commitment to the MI-Access project. That means we all need to understand its purpose and work to administer it with confidence and skill in Winter 2002 so that our students will count. There will be bumps and frustrations along the way, but we must be willing to work through them together.

Third, we need to educate and train our teachers thoroughly and as soon as possible. And, administrators need to be prepared to support teachers through every step of the assessment process. (Do not take your vacations in February or March next year.)

Finally, we need to remember that Michigan has always been a frontrunner in Special Education. I was hired in 1972, the year of Mandatory Special Education, and I have always been proud of the programs and services we offer here. We need to continue this honorable tradition by becoming a frontrunner in alternate assessment. We need to give all of our students in Michigan the honor of being counted and of being given equal access to every aspect of their education.

What is the Answer

continued from page 3

Subject/Grade	Audiotape	Reader
Reading (grade 4 and 7)	Standard	Standard
Science (grades 5 and 8)	Standard	Standard
Mathematics (grades 4 and 8)	Standard	Standard
Social Studies (grades 5 and 8)	Standard	Standard
Writing (grades 5 and 7)	Not available	Standard
Reading (HST)	Not available	Standard
Mathematics (HST)	Standard	Standard
Science (HST)	Standard	Standard
Social Studies (HST)	Standard	Standard
Writing (HST)	Not available	Standard

Please note: the District MEAP Coordinator should only order Audiotapes from the MEAP contractor. Audiotapes cannot be produced locally to be used for MEAP testing.

- Second, the MEAP scores accomplished by use of non-standard accommodations will not be eligible for Michigan Merit Award purposes.

- Third, accommodations not included on the standard accommodations list—which in the opinion of school officials, parents, teachers or other interested parties do not violate the MEAP Test Administration Ethics policy and do not interfere with the intent of the assessments—may be approved by the Michigan Merit Award executive director, pending review by the Michigan Merit Award Board. Information on standard and non-standard accommodations is listed on pages 13 and 16 of the 2001 Fall MEAP Coordinator and Test Administrator High School Tests Manual on the MEAP web site (www.meritaward.state.mi.us). There also is a link to the MEAP web site in the OSE/EIS website.

Parent Exemptions and Score Exclusion

In 2000, the United States Department of Education (USDE) and its assembled Peer Review Panel reviewed each state's assessment system to determine whether it was in compliance with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Title I. When the Michigan Department of Education's (MDE) system was reviewed, the group found several areas where it failed to meet requirements.

To bring the MDE's assessment system in line, Michigan has requested and received a time line waiver. Since failure to address all of the compliance requirements could result in jeopardizing Title I funds, the Department is working hard to make all necessary changes.

One area where MDE needs to make changes is in involving all students in Michigan's statewide assessment system. In doing so, MDE must provide the USDE with evidence of specific language of an inclusion policy that has been approved by the state legislature or the State Board of Education.

As explained in the August 2001 edition of MEAP Update, two significant changes are being made to meet the inclusion requirement. First, beginning fall 2001, there will no longer be a "parent exempt" bubble on any of the MEAP answer booklets.

Second, score exclusion—which enables schools to exclude assessment scores of students with disabilities and English Language Learners from elementary and middle school MEAP summary reports—will be phased out. During the 2001/2002 school year, score exclusion will not be an option for the new MEAP mathematics and science assessments, but will be an option for the reading, writing, and social studies tests. In the 2002/2003 school year, however, score exclusion will be completely phased out.

The reason for the two-year score exclusion phase-in is that it makes sense to introduce changes in policy at the same time that new MEAP assessments are introduced. Since new MEAP mathematics and science assessments are being implemented during the 2001/2002 school year, it makes sense to eliminate score exclusion for those tests at the same time. Ultimately, it is the fairest way to establish a new baseline for the new tests.

GLOSSARY



Content Standards: Content standards, as identified in the Michigan Curriculum Framework, "are presented as models for the development of local district curriculum by the Michigan State Board of Education and the Michigan Department of Education. They represent rigorous expectations for student performance, and describe the knowledge and abilities needed to be successful in today's society."

Benchmarks: While content standards describe what all students should know and be able to do in certain broad subject areas, benchmarks indicate what students should know and be able to do at various developmental levels (i.e., early elementary school, later elementary school, middle school, and high school) within the content standard.

Functional Daily Living/Academic Skills: Terms referring to traditional Daily Living/Academic instructional content areas that have been adjusted or adapted to an individual's needs. The individual's needs should be determined by an assessment(s) that considers cognitive, social, developmental and any other relevant areas. The intent of functional training is to better equip the individual for appropriate and effective interactions within a specific environment and/or their community.

Transition: Term used to describe the process of a student moving from school to adult life roles (such as adult living, community participation, post-secondary education and employment). Transition is federally regulated by IDEA, and is guided in Michigan by the Transition Services Project (TSP).

The Assist

Important MI-Access Dates

MI-Access District Coordinator/
Facilitator Conference.....November 8 and 13, 2001

MI-Access Assessment Materials
Arrive in DistrictsWeek of January 14, 2002

MI-Access Coordinator
TeleconferenceJanuary 23, 2002

MI-Access Assessment
WindowFebruary 18 – March 29, 2002



Bookmark these Websites:

<http://www.ccsso.org/>

<http://www.coled.umn.edu/NCEO>

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/index.html>

<http://www.idea practices.org>

www.melg.org/miem

This newsletter related to the assessment of students with disabilities is distributed to local and intermediate superintendents, directors of special education, MI-Access Coordinators, MEAP Coordinators, school principals, Parent Advisory Committees, and institutes of higher education. The Assist may also be downloaded from the Office of Special Education and Early Intervention Services Website. www.mde.state.mi.us/off/sped.

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